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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4243
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2842
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7420
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1465
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/UAE, Syria/Russia, Syria/Iraq, Lebanon (12/19)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Dec. 19 reported President Asad's arrival in Moscow starting a two-day working visit to the Russian Federation during which he will hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the situation in the Middle East and ways to strengthen bilateral relations. Papers also reported that President's earlier visit to Dubai and his meeting with Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates, Prime Minister and Governor of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashed Al-Maktoom. On Iraq, papers reported that on December 18 Syrian and Iraqi Interior Ministries signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the fields of immigration, passports, combating terrorism and crimes in addition to exchanging information and wanted people in both brotherly countries. Headlines featured a press statement by Turkish PM Erdogan in New York, confirming that Turkey rejects the partitioning of Iraq and, like Syria and Iran, supports its territorial integrity.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad in Moscow to discuss regional developments and bilateral relations with President Putin" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/19)

"President Asad reviews investment, economic and trade cooperation and mutual cooperation with Governor of Dubai Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashed Al-Maktoom" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/19)

"Vice-President for Cultural Affairs Najah al-Attar visits Kuwait and underlines necessity of confronting anti-Arab campaigns by dialogue and logic" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/19)

"Syrian and Iraqi Interior Ministries sign a Memorandum of Understanding in fields of immigration, passports, combating terrorism and crime in addition to exchanging information" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/19)

"Syria demands revealing which countries did not cooperate with Brammertz' investigation" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/19)

"A fragile ceasefire in the Palestinian territories. Abbas insist

on early elections. Blair holds HAMAS responsible for tension reiterating Israeli conditions" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/19)

"Killing of three US soldiers in Iraq. Bush adopts a new plan on Iraq. Additional forces to cement a political solution. Rejection of political settlements" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/19)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"So Arabs do not Lament"

Dr. Buthaina Sha'ban, Minister Expatriate Affairs, wrote in her weekly column in government-owned Tishreen, (12/19): "There are some efforts and arguments in the West that serve Arab rights, such as former US President Jimmy Carter's new book, the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, the farewell speech by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and the book by American Judge Elizabeth de la Vega.... But for Arabs to benefit from these voices, they need to renounce their differences and convey the painful reality of the region to the conscience of the international community....

"We lament the fact that Arabs are busy with the theories of moderation versus extremism, Sunnis versus Shiite, Fatah versus HAMAS, and so on -- theories that were created for Arabs by their enemies....

"The Arab political and intellectual elite must embrace their rights, take pride in their identity, and join forces with these rising international forces to convey the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its results in Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon to the living world conscience with a view to achieve justice and human dignity for Arab men, women, and children."

"A Crisis Heraldng a Catastrophe"

Umar Jaftali, a commentator in government-owned Tishrin, wrote (12/19): "The Palestinian infighting serves Israel's interests as it wastes Palestinian resources and capabilities and allows Israel to wriggle out of the peace requirements and complete the implementation of its hostile Zionist plan....

"There is a foreign plan to liquidate the Palestinian cause.... All Palestinians must avoid splits and divisions, return to national dialogue, and unify their ranks and efforts against the Israeli occupation...."

"Israeli Worry about Baker-Hamilton Recommendations"

Ibrahim Shuqayr, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (12/19): "The Baker-Hamilton recommendations have caused great fear for the majority of Israelis, especially the linking of the Iraq problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict....

"Although these recommendations are not binding, they showed the mistakes of the US Administration when it turned its back on the peace process in the region, practiced deception, demonstrated stubbornness and blind bias toward and surrender to Israel, and disregarded all the international efforts to establish peace in the region....

"The Baker-Hamilton recommendations remain a realistic option available to the US Administration to deal with them as one package, correct the course, and provide a way to address the other crises in the region. Without this, the US Administration will not arrive at any result and will continue to face problems, failures, and hatred in the region...."

